

3. The P.S.U. and French Socialism



Why does the Parti Socialiste Unifié [United Socialist Party (PSU)] exist?

Because its founders and its members think that socialists ought to act like socialists, in theory and practice; because, at the same time, they repudiate both sterile dogmatism and opportunism, which generates the most dangerous compromises.

What is the good of the PSU?

It is not to form a little sect, a cult of "Left Socialists" proud indeed of their purity, but only exercising a minimal influence on the flow of events. It pro-

poses to regroup all *socialists*.

All those united in the PSU struggled against the war in Indo-China, then against the war in Algeria, believing that any toleration of colonialism was anti-socialist. At the time of the infamous Suez expedition, they combatted preventive war for the same reasons.

From the first instant, and in all circumstances, they have opposed De Gaulle's regime of personal power.

The colonial wars are finished, the Suez adventure only lasted a few days. Many who gave De Gaulle their "democratic" even "socialist" support, participated in his government, voted for him when he was candidate for the Presidency, have finally gone into opposition in face of the more and more markedly class character of his regime. (The recent strikes have been the most obvious demonstration of this.)

Does this mean that the role of the PSU is ended?

Some well-wishers insinuate this at times, while rending the PSU the homage that it has saved the honor of socialism. They forget or pretend to forget:

1—That since it has denounced all nuclear experiments of a military character, in whatever country they took place, it is the only party which can inspire the struggle against atomic war. The PSU does not fight against only Gaullist bombs and the deplor-

able explosions in the Sahara, but the bombs of the NATO countries and those of the countries of the Warsaw Pact.

2—That its past attitude gives the PSU the necessary authority to denounce all sequels to colonialism, to expose the maneuvers of neo-colonialism and economic colonialism and to work successfully for the genuine emancipation of the underdeveloped countries.

3—For the PSU socialism does not take the form of a distant ideal to which we tip our hat devoutly at more or less regular intervals, but as a magnificent hope whose realization we can now see. It is naturally a question of a long, drawn-out task, requiring as much perseverance as courage and imagination. Believing at once in the unity and the renovation of the Left, the PSU proposes that this Left succeed the present regime. It does not propose (as the Bourbons of 1815 who through the great agony of the Revolution and the Empire “Learned nothing and forgot nothing”) to return to the state of things prior to May 13, 1958. It does not propose the restoration of democracy, but its installation. This is not a mere terminological dispute over words. Purely formal political democracy is emptied, little by little, of its substance. It would run the risk tomorrow, as it did yesterday, of preparing the stage for an authoritarian, perhaps even a fascist, regime. If we wish to establish democracy on an indestructible basis we must expand it in the economic and social fields. We must give the community, under a democratic and not a bureaucratic or technocratic form, fundamental economic control, preventing reconquest by the ruling classes of the positions taken from them. Should capitalism remain master of the fundamental bases of the economy it would rapidly endanger all reforms won.

How do we succeed in this?

By regrouping, in a large “socialist front,” not only the political parties which call themselves socialist, but also the unions of industrial and white collar workers, teachers, students, youth organizations, cultural movements, tenants organizations, young farmers, i.e., all the living forces of the working people determined to make socialism the order of the day.

The leadership of several traditional parties is too rotten and weighted with too damaging a past to lead such a regroupment. Incapable of renewing itself, of understanding the youth or of being understood by it, it cannot be resolutely oriented toward the future. The PSU thinks that socialists should not renounce socialism (and, alas, this affirmation is more original than it seems), but speak concretely and popularize a transitional program, intended to establish the foundations of socialist democracy. The conquest of power is not the end but the means of realizing an ideal electoral victory. A victory gained by adopting the views of

our adverseries is not preferable to a defeat in which our positions and objectives are forcefully presented to the people. The open socialist party that we wish to build should not be modeled on the American Democratic Party, whose example seems to haunt the dreams of some West European "socialists."

Certain statements have suggested to Ralph Miliband, a brilliant young English university instructor, this imaginary sermon that the *New Statesman* and *L'Express* have reprinted:

"Brethren, our churches are more and more empty. We must face facts; our message no longer attracts great crowds. The reason for this disaffection lies, I believe, in our obsessive attachment to Jesus Christ. There was a time when the appeal to charity, to love, to brotherhood, to the solution to injustice, to the expulsion of the merchants from the temple; in a word the image of Christianity according to Christ had a great popularity. This is no longer the case today. Values have changed, injustices have grown less harsh. The rich are now less rich and merchants, we must admit, have their role to play in society. No belief which rests on out-moded principles has a chance of winning adherents. That is why I tell you: abandon Jesus Christ and our reformed Christianity will be reinforced."

"Let us be afraid of causing fear," said Millerand formerly. This need to reassure took him from Saint Mandé to Bataclan. We do not plan to follow such an itinerary which was also that of Ramsay MacDonald and Snowden. "It is better to terrify than to dupe" said Leon Blum on his return from the concentration camp. We welcomed his message.

We believe that the Fourth Republic did not err through too much democracy but through too little and that, at the same time, certain "socialist" leaders did not err through too much socialism, but through too little or even none at all. This is why men and women, the youth in particular, have lost faith in socialism, in its principles, its ethic, its mission, its efficacy, its reason for existence. This demands a redefinition of socialism. I can hear the protests of the bigots and pharisees. So there is, they say in a shocked tone, a socialism of 1963, different from immortal socialism (they even say eternal, as others say eternal France) such as its founders proclaimed once and for all in a "tried and glorious" doctrine. To tell the truth, I am rather suspicious of those who want to "rethink" socialism, for I am far from persuaded when I hear them or read them, that they have even superficially "thought" it the first time. I haven't forgotten that a Belgian theorist invited us before the war to a voyage beyond Marxism, and that the imprudent tourists who took this trip found at the other end no novelty but Nazism. In 1933, I was at the side—and I don't regret it—of Leon Blum in his historic fight against "neo-socialism" and its famous trilogy "order, authority, nation." Some of its protagonists—and not the least important—rallied to the regime, of sinister memory, founded on "work, family, fatherland." I do not

think that the formula of Mauriac about "the Left, which must be reinvented," applies to socialism in spite of the terrible wound it has received: our Right, so unjustly accused of being "the most stupid in the world" has, in fact, been clever enough to have its policy carried out, in Algeria notably, by men who were believed socialists, since that is what they called themselves.

In fact, it is an adaptation to the problems of the day that socialism—of course, I am talking about authentic socialism—needs. A return to the roots can and must facilitate the indispensable renewal, if it is practiced in the spirit of Jaurès, in understanding that "it is in flowing to the sea that a river is faithful to its source," that "from the hearth of our ancestors, we must borrow, not the dead cinder, but the living flame." They are out of the picture who don't understand that scientific discoveries have never followed each other at such a pace as today and that they have never been so closely followed by practical applications which change the conditions of human life. The best way of not respecting the moral testament of the pioneers, is to attach ourselves to the formulas they used in the age of the steam engine, without changing an iota. The devout attachment to a traditional vocabulary has become a more and more laughable alibi for a denial of principles. Atomic and thermonuclear energy, electronics, automation, two world wars, revolutions, the stunning experiences that have taken place in the most different countries, give us grave cause for thought, if we are not resigned to condemning ourselves to impotence.

The dullest theoretical dogmatism and opportunism in daily life: these are the complementary faces of the crisis of socialism. It would be unjust to attribute it to the perfidy or cynicism of certain leaders. This only displaces the problem of responsibilities. It must still be explained why such men have been able to take and keep posts of command; while, under their direction, ruins collapsed, moral devastations accumulated and socialism, far from taking power, was little by little taken by it. If they have neither understood reality nor led members of goodwill toward the ideal, it is because they have been unable, or unwilling, to use a method, based on the experiences of yesterday, enriching and correcting them continually by drawing upon new experiences, victories as well as defeats. This is the way that scientists succeed in commanding nature by obeying it. The hypotheses on which they base themselves are not fixed like scholastic formulas. Far from constraining facts—stubborn facts—to enter plans fixed *a priori*, they solicit their permanent judgment and use reality so much the better as they consent to be relative to it. Political, economic and social nature does not have a different essence. To modify it, we must first analyze it and study it in its infinite diversity so as to discover the laws which rule its life.

Facts, however, teach us that socialization of the important means of production and exchange of riches is certainly a necessary but not sufficient condition for the construction of socialism. The abolition of private property and the collective appropriation of what had belonged to capitalism does not lead automatically to collective direction of production, that is, by the workers themselves. The most extensive planning does not suffice to transform the social relations among men within the enterprises. The experience of the USSR, of China, and the "Peoples Democracies" proves this. It is true that industrialization in these countries, far from preceding the conquest of power, according to the Marxist schema, followed it; and it was necessary because of the initial underdevelopment, to use forces and then massive investments in heavy industry at the expense of consumer goods, which favored centralizing and authoritarian tendencies. It is especially true that the working class, almost non-existent at the moment of the Communist revolution and hampered by a low level of technology, was not prepared to play the role it should play in a real socialist democracy. However, the PSU thinks that the situation will be fundamentally different when socialism conquers power in a technically advanced country. The risk of a technocracy, that is, a government of managers, such as James Burnham describes, still exists. Will the most competent technicians carry out the policies the workers want? Or will the technicians rule themselves, after having carefully studied the figures, bent over the statistics, established learned graphs and curves, neglecting the human aspect of the problem. These are the alternatives which, in all likelihood, will be posed tomorrow or the day after tomorrow in Western Europe and particularly in France. A permanent popular education is necessary to offer greater opportunity for economic and social democracy, that is, socialism, and not a sort of enlightened despotism of big administrators (everything for the people, nothing or almost nothing by the people). The PSU is increasing courses and week-ends of training, and conferences of a Center of Socialist Education. This seems infinitely more important than the creation of electoral committees and the search for a young and photogenic candidate for the Presidency of the Republic.

A penetrating study of modern society, its needs, its possibilities, its desires is necessary to anyone who should, in order to change the world, interpret it not as he imagines it, but as it is. How can men be free to enjoy the leisure that scientific progress permits? Is the substitution of the administration of things for the government of men and the withering away of the state, proclaimed by all the theorists, possible in the first phase of the installation of socialism? Or must we, on the contrary, strengthen the state provisionally, before suppressing it? How long will this transition

period last? Who will hold power, not nominally, but in fact? The PSU tries to answer all these questions, not by an out-of-date word battle but by bringing together in its study commissions manual laborers and intellectuals, many of whom have held posts in unions, who exchange and assess their experiences. We are under no illusions: the current weakness of socialism comes from a more or less conscious abdication before a man of providence or before a ruling class—capitalist or technocratic—to whom is given, openly or secretly, a kind of quasi-permanent vocation of leadership or monopoly of economic power. Our Swedish friends, who have won an unchallenged place in the vanguard of socialist democracy hesitate, in spite of their numerous successes, to take the decisive step and initiate, now, the democratic direction of the economy. The stage of preparation and formation, serious and fecund as it has been, seems too short to them. At least they have the merit of clearly posing the problem and preparing to solve it some day. If the emancipation of the workers is to be the task of the workers, it first requires that they have confidence in themselves. The triumph of the Labor Party in 1945 has sometimes been attributed to the collective war effort, an experience which instilled among working class voters a sense of self-confidence in their ability to rule the country. They were able, without contradiction, to pay homage to Churchill as leader of the resistance against Hitler and, as soon as peace was won, vote against Churchill, the leader of the Conservative Party. It was in themselves that they had confidence.

The more one believes in the revolution of reason, the more one must shake off torpor. The stakes are worth fighting for. We must know: who will use atomic energy and for what? Will two-thirds of humanity be saved from hunger and, with them, our civilization? This is the question.

THESE ARE THE TASKS the PSU has assigned itself. In 1905, at the birth of the SFIO, Jules Guesde brought it the rigor of scientific socialism: Jaurès, the passion of the republic; Edouard Vaillant, the revolutionary breath of the Paris Commune. Modern socialism, of which the PSU wishes to be the embodiment, should synthesize these various spiritual families and be inspired by the methods of its ancestors to attack the new problems presented to-day. Thus, the PSU is both the party of socialist fidelity and the party of socialist renewal.

Translated from the French by Owen Cahill.

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India's Disastrous Policy



IN THE CHINA CRISIS, the Indian government played a dual role of advocate of China and defender of India. Parallel to this dual role of the government was the confused will of the people. After the first days, this will was dominated by a desire to have done with the war. This is not to be confused with keeping a line of retreat open; that every army does, so as to be able to fight another day. This was simply a desire to get it over with as soon as possible, on any terms.

When the will to war is exhausted after a bitter struggle, and when no hope of victory remains, a people may become tired. But the Indian people tired simultaneously with every step taken. The war was never waged seriously. When asked why India did not declare war on China, Nehru replied that China might then bomb Delhi. To the demand that Indian troops attack the weak spots in the Chinese line, the reply was the fear of bombing. To the demand that Indian planes attack the advancing Chinese troops on Indian territory, the reply was the fear of bombing. Thus, a nation afraid of bombing has ambitions to defend its frontiers!

Limited war can mean two things, aside from avoiding use of nuclear weapons: 1) Unconditional surrender of the opposing government is not an aim; 2) Nor is enemy territory invaded beyond the point necessary to destroy the impetus of advancing army forces. If India had wished to defend its frontiers, it would have sought out troop and materiel concentrations in Tibet and tried to destroy them. The liberation of Tibet was not an issue; that question must be dealt with in different ways. The issue was the sincerity of India's resistance to the Chinese invasion.

It may be argued that the blame lay with the leadership, and not the people. This is not so; the people had the leadership they deserved. Nehru has sometimes excelled in physical recklessness, but he lacks moral courage. He lacks the capacity to make unfaltering decisions and stick to them at the cost of position or life. The people lack it too. Their sickness is the sickness of India.